

THE
COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL.

VOL. IV.

BOSTON, NOVEMBER 15, 1842.

No. 22.

FIFTH ANNUAL REPORT OF THE SECRETARY OF THE BOARD OF
EDUCATION.

[Continued.]

and, therefore, of its climate, than would be acquired by studying the map of Europe a month in the ordinary way. Every part of the globe admits of being viewed under these comprehensive aspects; and it is surely within the power of the committee, by an examination of two minutes' length, to ascertain whether the candidate is familiar with these methods, or whether his practice is confined to hearing droning recitations from a book. Emphatically, is it necessary, in the study of physical geography, and of the boundaries, or civil divisions of States, to have constant recourse to the black-board? In hearing a recitation in the common way, no teacher can certainly tell whether his pupil is not thinking of the text-book;—of the page, of the paragraph, of the lines and words, where a fact is stated;—but if a pupil can delineate, upon the black-board, the form of an island, a coast, or a country, the teacher then knows that the representation which comes out from the ends of his fingers, must have been copied from an image on the tables of his mind.

I say nothing here of the use of outline maps, or of the terrestrial globe, as, unfortunately, so few of our schools are provided with them.

GRAMMAR.—In regard to grammar, too, it is equally certain that a brief series of questions will disclose the teacher's mode of proceeding, and thus establish or set aside his claim to competency in this important department. If the teacher is conversant with no better way, than to put a common text-book of grammar into the hands of beginners, and to hear lessons recited by them, day after day, concerning definitions and rules, while, as yet, they are wholly ignorant of the classes of words defined, and have no conception of those relations which the rules express,—whatever other qualifications such a person may have, he, surely, has no aptness to teach grammar. The question is often asked, when, or at what age, children should begin to study grammar. If it is to be studied in the way above described, one would be almost tempted to reply, *Never*. But, if learned in a manner conformable to the order of nature, scholars may commence its study at almost any age. The perceptive powers, or those faculties by which we recognize separate existences or individualities, and qualities or properties, are developed at a very early period of life. Any child six years old, if his mind is skilfully led to the exercise, will be delighted to recall

and repeat the names of hundreds of things with which he is familiar,—such as the objects of sight, hearing, taste, and smell; the appetites, as hunger and thirst; and the emotions, as love, hope, gratitude, &c. His attention may then be directed to the obvious fact that each one of these names stands for thousands of individual objects, as the word *house* for all houses, *horse* for all horses, *color* for all colors, &c. He will then be pleased with knowing how we distinguish the different individuals of these respective classes from each other, by the use of descriptive epithets, as an old or a new house, a red or a white one, a large or a small, a high or a low, a beautiful or an ugly, &c. Thus, without mentioning the names, *noun* and *adjective*, the elementary ideas of those parts of speech are distinctly formed, and perceived to be wholly different from each other. The attention of the pupil may then be turned to the actions, and motions, and states of being, of all objects, animate or inanimate. He may be made to perceive that some actions are confined to the agent putting them forth, while other actions pass beyond the agent, and affect other persons or things. So, in regard to one of the modifications of this last class of ideas, which so often proves a stumbling-block to beginners in grammar, viz., tense or time. There is not a child in the State, of average capacity, and five years of age, who cannot understand the three great divisions of time,—past, present, and future,—as well as a philosopher. These three divisions being clearly perceived, it will then be easy for him to subdivide past time into the three portions which we designate as imperfect, perfect, and pluperfect, (unhappily, because the first two words, in this relation, have no analogy to their signification, when found elsewhere,) and also to subdivide the future into two parts. Now, all this not only can, but should, be done, without touch or sight of a grammar book; and, if well done, the pupil will possess an extensive knowledge of things, of qualities, of actions, and of relations, to which the technical names and rules of the text-book may be afterwards intelligently applied.

And, in the latter stages of this study, the whole question of fitness to teach may be determined by the inquiry, whether, on the one hand, the teaching is to consist of a senseless repetition of case, number, and gender; of mood, tense, and rule; or, on the other, in such an analysis, both of the language and the thought of an author, as leads out into rhetoric, as it regards the form and structure of the expressions, and into logic, as it regards the sequence and coherency of the ideas. In any thing worthy to be called grammar, both the style and sense of a writer are to be carefully investigated. The place assigned, in each sentence, to its principal idea or proposition; the juxtaposition of relatives to their antecedents, and of adjuncts to their principals; the manner in which collateral and subordinate ideas are introduced, so as never to be mistaken for the principal or leading ones; the concealment, the hiding-up, as it were, of expletive, auxiliary, and less significant words, instead of giving them prominency; the eligibleness of the words selected, over their synonymes; the easy transition from clause to clause, harmonizing with the gradation from thought to thought; the steady accumulation of meaning, with each additional expression, until, at last, a few words,—perhaps a single word,—with epigrammatic force, reveals the fulness and significancy of the perfected sentence;—these, and such as these, are the main, if not almost the only points, which can be useful

to the future writer or speaker ; and these, therefore, are the points to which the attention of the student in grammar should be directed. It is obvious that a pupil may describe the relation and properties of each word in a sentence, and yet leave their combined force wholly untouched. The beautiful diction, the profound meaning and condensed energy, of such authors as Milton, Pope, and Young, whose writings are so often selected for the parsing exercises of our schools, are not brought out and displayed,—not even a glimpse of them is revealed,—by the recitative and ding-dong of government and agreement, of gender, number, and case, mood, tense, and rule. So far as grammar is concerned, therefore, no person can be apt to teach, whose course of study has not led him to form an acquaintance with approved methods.

FLUENCY OF SPEECH IN TEACHING.—The opinion is often entertained, that mere fluency of utterance confers an ability to communicate knowledge, or aptness to teach. Some opportunity for observation coincides with the deductions of reason, in leading me to believe that this is a mistake. In attempting to unfold a subject to one devoid of all notions respecting it, the danger of failing lies rather on the side of a too rapid, than of a too moderate, enunciation. We are accustomed to refer to the quickness of thought, as one of the most striking emblems of velocity ; and, in our comparisons, we speak indiscriminately of the swiftness of lightning, and of the swiftness of thought. If we are referring to our thoughts on subjects with which we have been long familiar, the illustration is appropriate and expressive ; for, in such cases, the mind darts from end to end of an immense chain of associations, within an inappreciable lapse of time. But the very reverse is true when we are acquiring ideas on new and unaccustomed themes. If the thoughts of a mature and practised mind are, almost without a figure, called *winged*, because of their swiftness, those of an immature and unpractised one may, with equal propriety, be called *unfledged*, from the slowness and unsteadiness of their motions. The common mistake may have arisen from a want of discrimination between the emotions or affections of children, and their intellectual operations. The former are quick, the latter comparatively slow. Aptness to teach, therefore, seems to require, not rapidity, but great deliberateness, in communicating instruction ; and the order in which ideas are presented is indefinitely more important than the number offered in a given time.

NUMBER AND ALTERNATION OF STUDIES, AND REVIEWS.—Without glancing further, in this hasty and necessarily incomplete manner, at other tests or criteria of aptness to teach our Common School studies, it may be added that the committee, in five minutes' conversation with the candidate, can draw out his views in regard to the number of studies which, with the greatest advantage, can be simultaneously pursued ; the proper intervals between alternations from one study to another ; the frequency of reviews ; the propriety of using keys, question-books, &c.

It seems to be universally conceded that, as scholars advance in years, they can apply their minds, for a longer period, to a specific subject. Little children are incapable of long-continued application to the

same thing. Their attention flits from point to point. As their hand seizes quickly upon an object, and as quickly loosens its grasp,—as their feet bound from the earth as soon as it is touched,—so their minds catch single glimpses of one subject, and, with the volatility of a humming-bird, fly to another. The whole organization,—mind, brain, and limb,—vibrates to the pulsations of the heart, which are rapid, but weak. But, with the advance of time, and the repetitions of exercise, the power of concentration strengthens. As the mind becomes more mature, it pursues its investigations longer at once, and with a speed accelerated in the ratio of the time. It seems to perceive, almost intuitively, that it would lose momentum and headway by an interruption of the continuity of thought; and, therefore, it adheres to the same train of ideas more tenaciously, and for a longer period. Yet, notwithstanding the obviousness of these principles, it is a general fact, in regard to all our schools, that the younger scholars have far less variety and change in their exercises than the older. A monotonous course is enforced upon the young mind, while it is quick and volatile; but, as its power of concentrating itself upon any given subject increases, it is subjected to the dispersive influence of rapid changes. It must be a great reformation which will remedy this defect in our schools, and it is one imperatively called for.

Closely allied with the preceding topic is that of the alternation of studies, or the time to be occupied by one study before leaving it for another. In some schools, the periods of study and of recitation succeed each other every ten minutes; while, in others, the study of a single branch is enforced upon the scholars for three consecutive months, which seems to give no more relief to the fatigued faculties, nor opportunity for renovating their strength by alternate periods of repose, than would be allowed to the muscles, if each pupil were compelled to stand on one leg for the same length of time.

On the subject of reviews, the practice is not less various and contradictory. In some schools, a review of the lesson just recited is always included in the lesson given out. In some schools, the Wednesday and Saturday of every week are appropriated to a review of all the lessons of the two days which respectively preceded them. In others, again, the review-day comes semi-monthly or monthly; and the number of schools is not small, in which there is no review until the school term is considerably advanced, when it is commenced in earnest, and pursued to the exclusion of every thing else, until the day, and for the purpose, of examination.

QUESTION-BOOKS AND ARITHMETICAL KEYS.—In some schools, question-books are used, and the practice grows up into a common law of the school, that the questions put by the teacher shall be, both in number and form, precisely like those contained in the book. In other schools, the teacher's whole aim is to ascertain how much of the subject-matter of the lesson has been mastered by the pupil,—the formal questions in the book being disregarded by both parties. The difference between the minds of pupils whose lessons are studied and recited in these different methods, is that between emptiness and fulness.

In some schools, an arithmetical key is in constant use, by means of

which the pupil always knows the number or places of figures, and the value of them, at which he is to aim; and this knowledge becomes one of the elements in calculating the process by which the problem is to be worked. In this case, arithmetic degenerates into the art of obtaining, from known data, on unknown principles, a known result, whether right or wrong; instead of being that perfect science which, proceeding from known data, on known principles, evolves the true, but before unknown result, with infallible certainty. If the answers to all the practical questions raised in the business transactions of life were known beforehand, few would be so simple as to go through with a formula to obtain them. But either the answer must be known from some foreign source, or the principles must be known by which it can be educed. In life, the answer will never be known beforehand; and if the principles for obtaining it are also unknown, the result will be—universal error.

Perhaps the importance of no other Common School study can be made more obvious and palpable to all pupils than that of arithmetic. Almost every week, if not every day, the young arithmetician, in solving his imaginary questions, disposes of such quantities of goods as would make or ruin the fortune of a wholesale dealer; he makes calculations respecting such sums of money as but few capitalists have the disposal of; and he balances such heavy accounts between supposed merchants, as would decide the fortune of any actual merchant in Boston or New York, were the sums and quantities dealt with, real, instead of being fictitious. All these masses, whether of commodities or of silver and gold, the pupil decides upon, without a cent in his pocket, or any guarantor for his solvency. Now, the beauty of the process is, that, if he makes a mistake, however serious, no injustice is done to any body, nor does any pecuniary loss accrue to himself. But here he is in search of those principles, by virtue of which, as subsequent occasions to apply them may arise in the actual business of life, he can decide all questions respecting real commodities and real sums, without mistake, and therefore without loss to himself or injustice to others. Principles, then, should be the only object of the pupil's pursuit. But if arithmetic is studied, not for the purpose of mastering principles, but for the purpose of finding certain answers corresponding to those in the key, it becomes too worthless an object to satisfy the desire or stimulate the ambition of any child whose faculties have not been misled or perverted. Were the attention of the classes in arithmetic directed to the vast amounts of money, of stocks, and of merchandise, mentioned in their text-books, and were they then led to imagine the schoolhouse to be like a warehouse, an exchange, or a market-place, where all these things were bought and sold and their values adjusted, and themselves the agents or owners by whom the business was transacted, the puerile ambition of finding the answer contained in the key, would be lost in a sense of reality and responsibility, and all necessity of resorting to the pernicious stimulus of emulation, or rivalry with classmates, would be superseded.

In many of the arithmetical keys, formulas are given for the solution of all the more difficult questions, so that the difficulty is cancelled as soon as it is created, and the hardest questions in appearance are the easiest in fact. This seems about as wise as it would be, under pre-

tence of tasking or testing the muscular strength of a child, to put a burden of great weight into his hands to be carried a certain distance, but the moment he receives it, to take up both himself and the burden, and carry him to, and set him down quietly at the goal, without his exerting a muscle. In other schools, the use of keys is prohibited. The pupil is conducted to no answer, except under the guidance of principles; and he soon comes to rely upon principles with equal implicitness and delight, by daily witnessing the fidelity with which they lead him to truth.

GENERAL REFLECTION.—Now, it is certain that such conflicting practices cannot all have a foundation in reason and nature. If any of them are right, others of them must be very wrong; and the children of the State are suffering under the erroneous methods. Correct opinions concerning them all are involved in the qualification of aptness to teach; and by ascertaining the views of a candidate respecting them, the committee can relieve themselves from much uncertainty and hazard in regard to his competency.

MODE OF ASCERTAINING A CANDIDATE'S CAPACITY TO GOVERN.

Not a little, also, may be known of a candidate's capacity for the government of a school, by hearing even a brief expression of his views upon that subject, aided by an observation of his personal demeanor and bearing. If a teacher does not hold it to be a violation of one of his most solemn duties to indulge in expressions of contempt, in ridicule or anger towards his scholars, however stockish or contemptuous they may be, he is destitute of one of the first desiderata in the capacity to govern. Such a teacher, indeed, may overpower and subdue a school by brute force, as a conqueror subjugates a people and holds them in bondage by the terrors of fire and sword. But such a government is tyrannical, not paternal. The young and the insane resemble each other in being creatures of impulse, rather than of reason; and the expression of wrath in a superior, either produces its likeness in them, or else it overwhelms them with a stupefying, deadening sense of fear. No lineament of anger should ever deform the face of one who has the superintendence of either class. The minds of children, especially, should be kept sacred from such desecration.

The same inference, also, must be drawn, in regard to capacity for governing a school, if the teacher has no resources, for the prevention of idleness, or the suppression of a mischievous or disobedient spirit, but the infliction of punishment. So, too, if he has no expedients for enkindling a love of knowledge and a zeal for improvement, among his pupils, but the low and anti-social one of rivalry,—that is, a desire to surpass one's classmates or fellow-students, for the sake of winning a prize, or of standing conspicuous, at the head of a class, at the final examination of the school. In fine, if emulation and fear are his great motive-powers for securing proficiency and obedience, he wants capacity to govern.

The power of inflicting bodily pain is the lowest form of superiority. It is the instinctive resort of brute animals, which, having no resources in intelligence, appeal to force. It prevails most universally amongst the most savage tribes, where superiority of muscular power gives

superiority of social rank, and the regal title is conceded to the strongest. But the moment a barbarian takes a single step in advance of his fellows,—the moment he can build a better canoe, or speed an arrow with a surer aim, or can prognosticate the weather, or trail an enemy, with a keener eye,—he acquires a power over his tribe, independently of fear, and commands respect and precedence, without inflicting pain. And so through all the higher grades of intellectual and moral development. Every new accession of spiritual power supersedes, to the same extent, the necessity of appealing to the brute part of human nature, in establishing a control over it; and, so far as any one is obliged to make this appeal, he falls short of that noble, intellectual and moral ascendancy, to which all should aspire, and which some have already attained. As civilization has advanced, the wheel of torture has been arrested, and the instruments of terror and affright have ceased to be used as stimulants to duty or motives to obedience;—nay, the progress of civilization is measured by the extent to which, with equal efficacy, the higher motives have been substituted for the lower, in the government of men. Any person, therefore, at the present day, who is acquainted only with the lowest in the whole scale of motives,—who, in establishing his authority, begins back where the brute begins, and where the savage begins,—can have no approvable capacity for the government of a school. And can the school committee, who have not made a single inquiry of the candidate respecting his views of government, and who have not sought for information respecting him from other sources,—can they give a hasty approval, after a brief examination, and then justify themselves by throwing the responsibility on the law? When, on visiting a school, they witness the inexpressible injury which is caused by the application of false principles, or by proceeding in ignorance of all principles,—can they hold themselves fully exonerated from the charge of neglect, on the ground that the law requires of them an impossibility, when they have approved the candidate without seeking to ascertain his views on this momentous subject?

I would by no means be understood to express the opinion that, *in the present state of society*, punishment, and even corporal punishment, can be dispensed with, by all teachers, in all schools, and with regard to all scholars. Order is emphatically the first law of a schoolroom. Order must be preserved, because it is a prerequisite to every thing else that is desirable. If a school cannot be continued with order, it should not be continued without it, but discontinued. After all motives of duty, of affection, of the love of knowledge and of good repute, have been faithfully tried, and tried in vain, I see not why this “strange work” may not be admitted into the human, as well as into the divine government. Nor will it do to prohibit the exercise of this power altogether, because it is sometimes abused. The remedy for abuse is not prohibition, but discretion. This, however, is certain, that when a teacher preserves order and secures progress, the minimum of punishment shows the maximum of qualifications.

I pass by the subject of emulation, and the expediency of the committees’ inquiring of the candidate whether he means to employ it as one of the motive-powers of his school, with a single remark. The remark is, that throughout the State, the best and most successful teachers,—when they are not controlled by positive regulations of the

committees,—are more and more generally discarding its use. Their reasons are, that the decisions founded upon it are always difficult, and often unjust; that it tends to withdraw the mind from a love of knowledge for its own sake, to the desire of a conspicuous position and of ostentatious displays; that knowledge acquired under this stimulus will be less thorough and less permanent than if pursued and obtained for the intrinsic pleasure which its acquisition for its own sake always imparts; that, after a sufficient time has elapsed to form comparisons and to foresee the chances of success, the number of competitors is reduced to a few,—the incentive ceasing, through hopelessness, to operate on the many; that its tendency is to engender alienation, uncharitableness, and envy, among rivals; and, finally, that under the system of emulation as practised in our schools, those unhallowed passions of cupidity and of ambition will be nursed into strength, which, in after-life, will corrupt the mercantile community with the spirit of speculation and fraud, and desolate the political one with the tempests of party strife. To this I know it may be said, in reply, that the instinct or propensity of emulation is implanted in us by nature, and is therefore to be cultivated like any other natural endowment. So, also, are the instincts of anger, and pride, and avarice, and war, and of other selfish or sensual passions, implanted in us by nature. One answer applies equally to them all. From some cause, they are too strong already. They do not need inflaming, but repression. They are central fires burning beneath our feet, and already bursting up around us, and threatening to consume the most sacred and valued institutions of the land; and, like the surface beneath which a volcano labors, it will require a century for them to cool down to a habitable temperature, even if no new fuel adds rage to their flames. The Christian virtues are found to have an efficacy vastly superior, as motives to exertion; and they are infinitely more worthy to be employed, though we should only take into the account the highest welfare of children, in regard to their mortal and worldly relations.

HAVE THE CANDIDATES SOUGHT TO QUALIFY THEMSELVES?

But there is one inquiry which the committee may, in all cases, make of the candidate; and a negative answer to which, especially with regard to those who have had little or no experience, would go very far towards deciding the general question of competency. This inquiry is, whether the candidate has ever sought to obtain a specific preparation, either by attending a course of instruction under some competent master, or by carefully studying the best works on the subject, and by acquainting himself with the modes and processes adopted by the best teachers. Such opportunities now exist, at those light-spreading institutions, the Normal Schools. If a thorough course of instruction at these is too expensive, or requires too much time, there are numerous works on the subject of education, at once easily accessible and invaluable, which any person worthy to be intrusted with the interests of a school, can find, or *make*, an opportunity to read. "The Teacher," by the Rev. Jacob Abbott; "Palmer's Prize Essay, or the Teacher's Manual;" "The Teacher Taught," by Rev. Emerson Davis; Miss Edgeworth's "Practical Education;" "Progressive Education," a translation from the French of Madame Neckar de Saussure; the works

of Pestalozzi, Wyse, Simpson, Wilderspin, Stow, and others, together with the Lectures of the American Institute of Instruction, and the educational periodicals which, for the last few years, have been published, both in Europe and in this country;—all these instructive works leave a candidate wholly without excuse for his neglect, if without any preparation by training or study, he aspires to a station, where he will, to no inconsiderable extent, reproduce and multiply by fifties and by hundreds, his own style of manners, modes of thought, and aspects of moral feeling. Indeed, after all the light which has now been spread abroad upon this subject, the single fact, that a person proposes to assume a station where he will impart influences to the minds of the young which will abide with them, and constitute a part of their being and character while life lasts, without first having most anxiously and perseveringly sought to fit himself for the momentous duty, is sufficient to decide the question of *moral character*! For how can any one sustain a claim to justice, benevolence, or any other element of morality, who offers to render a service for which he is consciously incompetent;—or, if not conscious of his incompetence, the case is aggravated, because such a fact would argue the lowest state of ignorance,—that ignorance, namely, which does not know that there is any thing to be learned.

Suppose a person, merely because he might be out of employment, or because, for any other reason of health or ease, he should prefer in-door to out-door occupation, should establish himself in the business of an apothecary, and, owing to his utter ignorance of the *Materia Medica*, the first prescription he should fill should cause instantaneous death. Standing in the midst of a bereaved family, surrounded, perhaps, by a group of orphan children, would it be any exculpation for him to say, "I knew no better"? The answer is, it was his duty to know better, or to abstain from the business; and the spirit of the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill," applies to him in all its penal force; but no more fully than the injunction to "train up a child in the way he should go," attaches to every one who assumes the guardianship of children. An inextinguishable desire to promote the greatest good of others, is one of the most valuable qualifications in a teacher; and no one, over whose actions this desire is enthroned, can stifle or appease the upbraidings of conscience, under the conviction that he is doing children harm, or that he is not doing them the greatest practicable amount of good. To prepare himself for this duty, any person who is worthy to fill the sacred office of teacher, will study and meditate; he will seek information from all sources, and daily replenish and fortify his mind with the most elevating and sustaining motives.

It is one of the offices of a teacher to provide aliment for the mind, just as the parent who is attentive to the natural wants of his children, provides aliment for the body. There is the closest analogy between these relations. What is given by either, will be assimilated, by the mysterious processes of nature, and become a part of the child's system, bodily or mental. If the food, furnished by the natural parent, be sufficient and nourishing, and supplied in accordance with the laws of health, then the whole corporeal frame will thrive, and grow in stature and might; but, on the other hand, if it be scanty or unhealthful, then emaciation and debility of the physical system will betray the parental improvidence. And so of the mental powers;—if nourished by that

knowledge which is their appropriate food, if stimulated to a healthful activity, and allowed their due alternations of exercise and rest,—these higher powers will expand with a rapidity, and glow with an intense and joyous vitality, which has no parallel in the organic or unintelligent world;—and, if guided by right affections, they will become, in their maturity, not only the admiration, but the blessing, of mankind. But, on the other hand, if these supplies, through the forming years of childhood, are meager, or distasteful, or noxious, then will the season of manhood come on, unaccompanied either by the capacity or the inclination to perform the duties that will await it. It is not, therefore, in the power of a finite being adequately to conceive the difference between two teachers, one of whom teaches well, and imparts knowledge bountifully, while the other mingles such errors with his instructions that his best recommendation consists in his imparting so little. The candidate for a school comes before the committee, asking permission to fill a stewardship, where his duty will be to distribute a rich repast of knowledge to the youth who may assemble around him, and who are hungering and thirsting for his bounty. And hence, the unimaginable difference between one who is able to give generously and to give constantly, and whose supplies are never exhausted, and another, who, from his indigence, doles out only crumbs and drops, and even then is soon empty and dry. And what right has any one to expect fulness of resources for every emergency, and skill to impart to all, according to their wants, and in due season, if he has not replenished his mind by reading, nor matured his judgment by contemplation, nor sought instruction from the masters of the art? Knowledge and capacity, of this high nature, come not from instinct nor from intuition. Labor, and study, and toil, and an imitation of the best masters, alone have the prerogative of conferring them.

There is a teacher in this State, who, although he has labored constantly in his profession for thirty years, does not, even now, hear a recitation, without first going carefully over the lesson,—not so much to revise principles which must already be familiar to him, as to preadapt his questions and explanations to the different attainments and capacities of his pupils. When out of school, he spends many hours, daily, in preparing for its exercises, and in devising the wisest means for correcting, by intellectual and moral influences, any remissness or waywardness in individual scholars. In these hours of study and contemplation, he enkindles in his own spirit that fervency of Christian love, and digests those plans of practical wisdom, by virtue of which, without ever resorting to corporal punishment or emulation, or appealing to any low motive whatever, he secures the greatest extent of intellectual proficiency, and fuses and remoulds the most refractory dispositions. The zeal and progress of the pupils in this school correspond with the assiduity and conscientiousness of its teacher. What parent, worthy of the name, would not submit to any sacrifice to secure such a teacher for his children, rather than to employ one who, after spending a long summer on a farm, or in a shop, or in trafficking in small goods, from town to town, suddenly suspends his accustomed occupation, and, taking a small bundle of books under his arm, with a ferule conspicuously displayed on its outside, enters the schoolroom, without revising a lesson he is to teach, or bestowing a thought upon the prin-

ciples by which he is to govern, but rashly trusting to extemporaneous light and inspiration for his guidance, in all cases of doubt or difficulty? Fertilizing and purifying influences are richly showered down, by the one, fulfilling the promise of a most luxuriant growth; while the other not only destroys the hope of a harvest, but impoverishes the very soil on which it should have flourished.

During the last year, I have repeatedly visited schools, in towns where the plan of gradation has been adopted, and, on comparing pupils who are now in their fourth school year, under one instructor, with those who followed them, and are now in their second school year, under another, I have found the latter, not only in orderly habits, in pleasing manners, and in lively attention, but, in the amount of their literary attainments, actually surpassing the former, though under instruction less than half the time. And were it possible, by any mental chemistry, to neutralize or dissipate all the knowledge acquired by the younger department, still leaving them in possession of their habits of attention and application, they would soon overtake and again outstrip their seniors. No wealth which can be bequeathed to a child, can be so valuable as the fortune of attending such a school as the latter; and the great difference for the present,—the still greater difference for the future,—which will result from these ennobling and enriching, or from those degrading and pauperizing influences, is resolvable into a single fact,—a difference in the qualifications of teachers.

I have dwelt thus long upon this subject, in the hope of conveying some idea, however inadequate, of the vast distance that lies between a good and a poor teacher,—how wide asunder they are;—and of showing that the law is not so unreasonable as has sometimes been supposed, since tests do exist, to which the committees can appeal, for the purpose of discriminating one class from the other.

The last reports of the committees exhibit proofs that the contrasts between teachers are beginning to be more justly appreciated. And hence it is proper that all persons who are now aspiring to this responsible station, should know that if, in past times, ignorance and deficiency have been winked at, the keen and wide-opened eye of the public is now turning upon them, and exposure must follow delinquency.

SIMULTANEOUS EXAMINATION OF CANDIDATES.

In many towns, the committees have established the practice of appointing a particular day and place, or, where the number of districts is large, two or more days and places, for the examination of candidates for the summer and winter terms, respectively. In one instance, certainly, if not in more, a vote has been passed by the town, that if the candidates do not appear, at the appointed time, but make an extra meeting of the committee necessary, they shall themselves defray the expense of the extra session.

There is great advantage, as well as economy, in having all the candidates for the season examined at the same, and at an assigned time. All the members of the committee are more likely to assemble. The examination will be more faithful and thorough. After the examination is closed, an opportunity will be afforded to the committee to make extended remarks, or even to deliver an informal address, on any of the various topics which the condition of the schools, or the appearance

of the candidates, as disclosed on the occasion, may render most eligible. Nor is it unworthy of remark, that this assembling of the teachers will furnish an opportunity to them for the commencement of a friendly acquaintance, and for making arrangements for weekly or semi-monthly meetings, to be held by themselves during their ensuing term. Many teachers have gratefully spoken of the light and encouragement which these stated interviews have shed upon a path otherwise dark and solitary.

I may remark, in passing, that such meetings need not be confined exclusively to teachers. The town committee, the prudential committees,—any one, indeed, who can contribute to the interest or the usefulness of the occasion,—should be welcomed. But it may not be superfluous to add the caution that, if the assembly should become promiscuous in regard to its members, it should not be so in regard to its objects, but its discussions should always have a direct relation to the science or the art, the necessity or the utility, of Common School education.

INFLUENCE OF SECTARIANISM ON SCHOOLS.

In passing in review the leading facts communicated by the committees' reports, there is one of a painful kind, though fortunately of limited extent, which I do not feel at liberty to omit; because, in an impartial survey of our school system, whatever is adverse to its beneficent and comprehensive operation, should be noticed, not less faithfully than that which is propitious.

In my Report of last year, I referred to the harmony of opinion on an important subject, which, unmarred by a single discordant note, pervaded the reports of the committees from all parts of the State. According to that opinion, our schools are an institution to be sustained at the common expense of all the citizens, for the equal benefit of all their children; and they are, therefore, to be kept free from those controverted questions, whether political or theological, on which, unhappily, wide diversities of opinion or belief now prevail,—and must, indeed, continue to prevail, until the happy day shall come when all men shall "see eye to eye." The statement which published the fact of this universal harmony of sentiment respecting the schools, amidst wide differences of opinion on other subjects, has been hailed with joy by the best friends of mankind, and quoted with warm commendation, in leading newspapers and periodicals, of adverse parties, both in our sister States and in foreign countries. The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has been congratulated on having reached that point in civilization, where good men of all parties can coöperate for the promotion of a common object of acknowledged value, notwithstanding a want of unanimity on other subjects.

In repeating the statement, this year, I am compelled to make an exception in regard to the two small Shaker families or communities, in the towns of Shirley and Harvard. It appears by the reports of the committees of those towns, that these two villages withdrew themselves, during the last year, from the provisions of the general school law. The first named society refused to allow its teacher to be examined, or its school to be visited by the town's committee. I believe these to have been the first instances, in the State, where an organized school

district has assumed the right of absolving itself, on such grounds, from the supremacy of the law ; and the course of proceeding seems to have been correctly described, in one of the reports, as a " nullification " of the school law.

If such a case must arise, it seems fortunate that it has occurred amongst a sect where the authority of numbers is not added to the weight of example. It is fortunate, too, that it has occurred in a place where all the residents upon the territory embrace one faith, and where, therefore, the children of parents who hold other views, are not involved in the consequences of this violation of the law. Indeed, if others living within the same district, had been deprived, by this course, of their school privileges, we ought in charity to suppose that a measure so obviously unjust, as well as illegal,—as in that case it would be,—would never have been adopted. If a difference of opinion, on collateral subjects, were to lead to secession, and to exclusive educational establishments among us, it is obvious that all the multiplication of power which is now derived from union and concert of action, would be lost ; and the burden of supporting public and free schools which is now so easily borne by the united strength of society, would become so heavy as to crush the individual, and therefore, in the end, would cease to be assumed. Our only alternative, then, is mutual toleration, or the abandonment of the free school system, and with it, all hopes of a general education of the people. At first, indeed, a few classes, whose views should most nearly resemble each other, might form an alliance against opponents separated from them by a broad line of distinction ; but as soon as the common enemy should be overcome, intestine dissensions would succeed to foreign hostilities. It is a remark, borne out by the concurrent testimony of all history, that when conflicting parties unite against a common foe, a conquest is no sooner achieved than the seat of the war is transferred to their own territory. Victory abroad is followed, not by peace, but by strife, at home. It is also a remark, which wants little of being universally true, that when disunion breaks out among members of the same fraternity, the bitterness of the feud increases, as the difference between the combatants becomes less. It can never be expected, therefore, that harmony amongst the victorious allies, will be one of the rewards of triumph. Apply these conclusions from universal history and experience, to our school system, and it becomes obvious that, if once the principle of secession be admitted, because of differences in religious opinion, all hope of sustaining the system itself, must be abandoned as fallacious. Nor does alienation spring from doctrinal differences only. The hostility between political parties is waged as earnestly as that between religious. Indeed, the contest about political men and measures, occupies, at present, far more of the public mind than the contest for different modes of faith ;—and, numerous as polemical combatants and presses are, on subjects pertaining to the church, the combatants and presses, on matters pertaining to the state, are a hundred to one. But supposing each religious and each political party to withdraw from its opponents, and establish its own schools, not one half of the latent elements of repulsion would have been developed. No cause, at the present day, draws broader lines of demarkation between citizens, neighborhoods, and parishes, than that of Abolition ;—whether abolition in the generic sense, or those specific

parties into which the original cause is now divided. The waters of bitterness which have been raised by the Temperance movements, also, have not yet subsided; and, catching the general spirit of discord, even the champions of Peace and Non-Resistance might insist upon exclusive institutions for themselves, at least for purposes of self-defence, if not of aggressive proselytism.

It must be apparent to all, that, before such a disastrous movement had half reached its consummation, our school system,—alike the glory of the past, and the hope of the future,—would be broken into fragments. In all our country towns, where reside, not only the numerical majority, but the strength of the State, a barrier of separation, high and thick as the Chinese wall, would be erected around every house, to save it from the contact and contamination of its neighbors;—nay, in many cases, several such walls must run through the same house, to protect members of the same family from the contagion of each other's heresy. Under such a disastrous and fatal course of policy, all of great and good which has been done for us by our venerated ancestors, through the instrumentality of our schools, would be speedily obliterated. Civilization would counter-march, retracing its steps far more rapidly than it had ever advanced; and, amid the impulses of human selfishness, and the rancor of spiritual pride, the heaven-descended precept, to "love one another," would practically pass into oblivion. The broadest and grandest social distinction which exists between our own times and the dark ages, consists in this,—that more persons, whose private interests or opinions conflict, can so far tolerate each other, as to unite their efforts and their resources, to promote the common objects of philanthropy. And hence it follows that whoever would instigate desertion, or withdraw resources, from the common cause, is laboring, either ignorantly or wilfully, to shroud the land in the darkness of the middle ages, and to reconstruct those oppressive institutions of former times, from which our fathers achieved the deliverance of this country.

We need look no further than to a neighboring city, in a border State, to see the disastrous consequences of implicating the great and universal interests of education, with those of particular religious sects. For nearly two years, the city of New York has been intensely agitated, by a question between Catholics and Protestants, respecting the distribution of the school fund; and so comprehensive have now become the widening circles of the controversy, as to threaten to engulf the whole State in its vortex. We are not called upon to intimate an opinion as to the merits of the respective parties to that unhappy controversy, but it would be blindness and fatuity in us not to draw a practical moral from so instructive a lesson.

In Great Britain, too, the progress of National Education has been arrested, and all the late exertions of its pure, and powerful, and enlightened friends have been paralyzed, because the predominating sect in that kingdom withholds its assent to any system whose religious influences it cannot control; while the different classes of dissenters, although willing to concede an equality of influence to their opponents, resist their monopoly of the whole.

Are not facts and considerations, like these, enough to admonish us, that, however much we may respect the two Shaker communities in the towns of Shirley and Harvard, there is nothing, either in the mo-

tive which originated their "nullification" of the school law, or in any of the consequences to which such "nullification" tends, which should lead any party in the Commonwealth to acknowledge itself their imitator, by copying their example?

INEQUALITY IN THE MEANS OF EDUCATION.

The inequality in the means of education possessed by the children in the different towns and sections of the State, is a subject of great moment, and one not treated of in any former Report. A comparison of the statistical returns for the last year, has developed facts not heretofore conceived of by the best informed friends of the cause.

Much has been, and much still continues to be, both said and written respecting that equality in the laws, and equality under the laws, which constitutes the distinctive feature of a Republican government. By abolishing the right of primogeniture and entails, by the extension of the elective franchise, and in other ways, much has been done towards realizing the two grand conceptions of the founders of our government, viz., that political advantages should be equal; and then, that celebrity or obscurity, wealth or poverty, should depend on individual merit. But the most influential and decisive measure for equalizing the original opportunities of men,—that is, equality in the means of education,—has not been adopted. In this respect, therefore, the most striking and painful disparities now exist. One source of this difference, indeed, is to be found in the almost unlimited freedom of action exercised by the different towns in regard to their liberality or parsimony, in appropriating money for the support of schools, and their fidelity or remissness in the supervision of this great trust. In this respect, the towns resemble individuals. One parent will make all sacrifices, he will economize in his pleasures, dress, shelter, and even in his food, to save the means of educating his children; while another,—perhaps his nearest neighbor,—will sell the services of his children for a few pence a day, through the whole year, that he may hoard their earnings, or spend them in dissipation. The towns have been left, substantially, to the exercise of the same free will. It is true that the law, from time to time, has imposed certain obligations upon them; but these obligations they have generally obeyed or neglected, at their option. Indictments against them for non-observance of the law have been very few, though their omissions to obey it have been many. The judicial records of the State will show a hundred prosecutions against towns, for the defective condition of their roads or bridges, for one complaint on account of omissions or transgressions of the school laws. Some towns, through the influence of a few public-spirited and enlightened individuals, have not only observed, but gone far beyond the requisitions of the law; while in other towns, where a few men of an opposite character have gained a preponderating influence, the schools have fallen far below its minimum requirements. On a broad survey of the State, and an inquiry into the causes which have led to the superior intelligence and respectability of some towns, as compared with others, it will almost uniformly be discovered, that the foundations of their prosperity were laid by a few individuals,—in some cases by a single individual,—in elevating the condition of their Common Schools.

Under these different circumstances, the most striking inequalities

have grown up. According to the Graduated Tables inserted at the end of the school abstract, it appears that, in regard to the amount of money appropriated for the support of schools, the difference between the foremost and the hindmost towns in the State, is more than *seven to one!*

There were five towns which appropriated, for the last year, more than five dollars for the education of each child within their limits, between the ages of four and sixteen years.

11 other towns appropriated more than \$4 for each child within the same years.

28	"	"	"	"	3	"	"	"
123	"	"	"	"	2	"	"	"
139	"	"	"	"	1	"	"	"
1	"	"	less than	1	"	"	"	"

The average of appropriations for the whole State was two dollars and seventy-one cents, for each child between the above-mentioned ages. No town, in the counties of Berkshire or Barnstable, came up to the average of the State, and in the county of Bristol, only one town, (New Bedford,) equalled it.

If any one will take a map of the Commonwealth, on which the several towns are delineated, and, with a pencil, enter the amount appropriated by each for the support of schools, he will be astonished at the difference between towns situated in the vicinity of each other; and, oftentimes, at that between contiguous towns. Let the county tables be referred to, and it will be seen that towns standing at or near the head of the column, and those which could stand at the head only on condition that the order of precedence should be reversed, are towns which, geographically, lie side by side, or in the near vicinity of each other, and in regard to whose natural resources, or eligibility of location, there is but little difference. In taking the single step which carries us across the ideal line separating one town from another, we pass through an immense moral distance. We pass, as it were, from the fertility of the tropical zone to the sterility of the frozen, without any intermedial temperate. It is a common device of geographers, for illustrating the different degrees of civilization or barbarism existing in different parts of the globe, to variegate the surface of a map with different colors and shades, from the whiteness which represents the furthest advances in civilization and Christianity, to the blackness denoting the lowest stages of barbarism. A similar map has been prepared, representing the educational differences between the different departments in the kingdom of France. A map of the different towns of Massachusetts, drawn and colored after such a model, would exhibit edifying, though humiliating contrasts. It would show that, during the last half century, the most efficient cause of social inequality has been left to grow up amongst us unobserved; and it would

[To be continued.]

BRIDGEWATER NORMAL SCHOOL. The next term of the Bridgewater Normal School will commence on Wednesday, the 30th instant.
Bridgewater, Nov. 15, 1842. N. TILLINGHAST, Principal.

[THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL; published semi-monthly, by WILLIAM B. FOWLE AND N. CAPEN, No. 184 Washington Street, (corner of Franklin Street,) Boston. HORACE MANN, Editor. Price, One Dollar a year.]